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## Teaching Christian Ethics [Review of A Textbook of Christian Ethics, fourth edition by Robin Gill]

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## Teaching Christian Ethics

Robin Gill, *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*, fourth edition (London, T&T Clark, 2014. £24.99. pp. xv + 575. ISBN 978-0-5675-9592-8).

Do textbooks have a future? With undergraduate courses increasingly supported by online learning platforms, students no longer have to lug around a volume like this, which weighs in at over a kilo and occupies almost two cubic litres of space. Robin Gill's textbook is also available online, but course managers can now easily compile their own set of readings and put it online too. Nevertheless, might this volume offer superior resources? It comprises five sections on methodology; politics, economics and justice; war and peace; environment; and human life and interpersonal relationships. Like its three predecessor editions, each of its sections opens with a trio of excerpts from Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther followed by texts from recent decades accompanied by some comment and critique.

Although the attempt to bring students to engage with contemporary issues via classic texts is greatly to be welcomed, the format established in the volume's 1985 first edition now requires complete overhaul. The coverage of Luther in preference to John Calvin makes little sense globally and leaves a large gap. Henry Bettenson's 1972 translation of Augustine's *The City of God* is unlikely to excite students as much as a newer rendition in contemporary idiom. The texts by Joseph Fletcher on situation ethics, F.C. Copleston on objections to natural law and Reinhold Niebuhr on morality and society, all of which featured in the first edition, feel dated thirty years on, and few students are likely to be interested in Don Cupitt's diffuse solar ethics. Lastly, the publisher has failed to refresh the back cover endorsements even though two of the three endorsers have now died.

The editor writes that the 'gender balance is fast changing within the discipline' (p. xiii) and explains that in response he has added an article by a woman to each of his five sections. But might the increasing prominence of women's voices in Christian ethics discourse not present a more fundamental challenge to his syllabus? Issues around low pay, food and family life are ignored, while sexuality, incredibly, receives no discussion, despite being so prominent and divisive in churches. Furthermore, the volume's structure permits no coverage of thinkers like Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida, who despite not being Christian have made major impacts on Christian ethics by helping it to recover an interpersonal concern. Course managers, although thankful to Gill for some leads, might for these reasons prefer to collate their own set of resources.

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